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M'sia aims to draw 8 million Chinese tourists

> Target to be achieved over next five years

ALOR GAJAH: Malaysia has set a target of drawing eight million tourists with RM22.1 billion spending power, from China over the next five years, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

He said the eight million figure would seem huge compared with the 1.3 million Chinese tourists who visit Malaysia annually now, but it was not impossible to attain it with proper planning and effective promotion.

"The RM22.1 billion spending power may seem very big but it is not impossible to garner as each Chinese tourist spends on average RM3,345 now on food, lodging and shopping," he said when opening the Freeport A'Famosa Outlet that offers various fashion, sport and accessories brands.

Though Malaysia recorded a large number of tourist arrivals last year, he said the government wanted to focus on attracting tourists from certain countries over the next five years.

Ahmad Zahid said the presence of tourists with their spending power will give an immediate effect to national economic growth.

Agencies like Tourism Malaysia would gain assistance in obtaining supplementary allocations to enhance the national tourism sector.

He said Malaysians who are icons abroad, such as singer-songwriter, actress and record producer Shila Amzah, who is based in Hong Kong, are seen as having great potential to help promote the country's tourism industry.

He noted Malaysia gave ample room for private tourism entrepreneurs but they had to be given assistance, particularly by tourism agencies such as Tourism Malaysia.

"It is hoped that tourism-related agencies will also promote other states abroad, without solely depending on the state governments to do this, because everything is for the good of the Malaysian tourism sector," he said. - Bernama